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WILLSON MANUSCRIPT

BY

Margaret Willson Mighell

1819

Transcribed with some alterations
and additions by George M. Wakefield.

Gift '37

WILLSON FAMILY OUTLINE

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1							
John	Willson	born in		England		married	
Hannah	James						
2							
James	Willson	"	Boston, Mass.		1663	"	1687
1st Deborah	Pierce		Woburn, "				
2nd Margaret	Russ						1703
(Mrs. Wm. Peters)							
3							
Thomas	Willson	"	Lexington "		1710	"	1728
Abigail	Whitmore						
4							
Margaret	Willson	"	Killingly, Conn.		1729	"	1754
Ezekiel	Mighell		" "		32		

JOHN WILLSON was born in England about the year 1620; he was a soldier in the English army and while fighting for the crown was sent to Scotland as one of the Light Horse Brigade and there distinguished himself as a very brave man.

The Scotch were then in the habit of sending out champions every morning to dare the English to fight, which very much infuriated them.

One morning, according to their usual custom, they sent out their Champion who rode back and forth in a very provoking manner, daring them to fight. The English general walked forward and said to his men," Which of my brave boys will go out and bring in that rebel's head to me?" John Willson immediately steped forward and said, " I will go." " Go," said the general.

He immediately mounted his horse, rode off to meet the challenger. They met, rode back and forth, their drawn swords gleaming in the air. They made several passes at each other's head; at length Willson catching his opportunity slipped his pike under that of the Scotchman's, tipped him off his horse, sprang upon him, and with his sword pinned him to the ground, then drew it out, cut off his head and stuck it on the point of his pike, mounted his horse, and rode back in triumph to the great astonishment of the whole army, and presented it to the General, who loaded him with praises.

The armies then met in an engagement, the English were successful and returned in triumph. Willson was captured by the Scotch, but he being acquainted with the man who captured him, he persuaded him to let him go, on condition that he would not take up arms against the Scotch again. For a short time they remained quiet.

Willson in the meantime courted a lady of large estate by the name of Hannah James, whom he married. The Scotch and English did not remain long at peace; the English were again called to arms. This was a trying time for Willson, he must either leave his native land or break his parole. To fight the Scotch again was certain death if captured; to stay at home was impossible. He communicated this to his wife, telling her it would be very hard to leave his beloved wife and child behind, but he could not ask her to leave her native land, relatives, friends and acquaintances to cross the tractless ocean and land on the western continent, then almost uninhabited by anyone, but natives.

She listened attentively to all of their terrifying and frightful stories, but it did not in the least shake her resolution, for she was at the first moment resolved to accompany him, let the consequence be what it would.

They accordingly sold all their possessions, furnished themselves with everything necessary for the voyage. They took leave of their numerous friends, relatives and her weeping sire, their native land, withstood the beckoning of friends and launched upon the open sea.

They set sail about the year 1654. Nothing essential happened on their voyage until they were in sight of Boston when the vessel ran upon the rocks and was wrecked. About one-hundred persons were on board. The long boat was immediately lowered and the women and children were hurried into it.

Mrs. Willson in the excitment of the moment forgot her sleeping babe, but one of the sailors happened to see the child, caught i up and called to the mother, who held her apron out-streched as the sailor tossed the child into it, just as the boat cut loose from the vessel. Those who remained after the long boat pulled away, swam ashore using boards and whatever they could find to help them to keep afloat, and not one was lost.

They landed in Boston, Mass., which was a very small town; one bake shop served for the inhabitants and all the seamen.

Mr. and Mrs. Willson having lost everything, but the clothes on their backs and a small trunk of clothes for the child, had to do manual labor; he trucked with a wheelbarrow and she took in washing from the inhabitants. She had never until now, even washed her own clothes. Many were the tears she shed over the wash tub. Two or three years passed in this manner, when the Governor of Boston ordered a new township laid out eleven miles northwest of Boston, this they called Woburn; he then offered several hundred acres of land to those who would venture out and settle this new tract.

Mr. Willson was one of the adventurers. Many were the hardships they encountered in this new enterprise. He being destitute of farming utensils and a team, they were obliged to cut the brush and dig up the ground with a hoe. In this manner they cultivated their land. Mrs. Willson would frequently work almost all night helping her husband pick up brush and burn it. Such were the hardships they endured in bringing up a large family, five sons and five daughters; he was killed by a timber falling from a barn, which he was taking down, upon his head, breaking his skull; he wasfifty one years of age; July 2, 1687. She married secondly Fuller.

Children born in England:

1- John born m. Rebecca

Children born in Boston, Mass.:

2- Sarah born
3- Samuel " Dec. 29, 1658,
4- Francis " m. Patience
5- James " 63, m. 1st. Deborah Pierce
2nd. Margaret Russ Peters

Children born in Woburn, Mass.:

6- A dau. born
7- Abigail " Aug. 8, 1666, m.
8- Elizabeth " Aug. 6, 68, m. Isaac Hildreth Nov. 12, 1685
9- Benjamin " Oct. 15, 70,
10- Hannah " May 31, 72, m. Jonathan Pierce Nov 19, 89.

Ref. Willson Manuscript by Margaret Willson Mighell 1819.

JAMES WILLSON (2 John 1) was born in Boston, Mass. 1663 the fourth son of John and Hannah James Willson; he married January 19, 1687 Deborah Pearce of Woburn, Mass. by whom he had twelve children, nine sons and three daughters; the eldest child a daughter born in 1688, died young in 1696; Deborah, Abigail and James were baptized in August 1699, died young; Ebenezer was baptized October 15, 1699 and John was baptized September 17, 1704, both died young; his wife then fell a victim to some fatal malady; at this time they were living in Lexington, Mass.; He hired Mrs. William Peters as his housekeep
His children became very much attached to her and as she was a very agreeable young woman, he proposed marrying her; they were married in the winter of 1703-4. She had one son by her first marriage, John Peters. They lived together fifty years and had six children; at the time of his death 1753 they were living in Killingly, Conn.; she died the next year 1754 being eighty years of age.

Children born in Mass.by Deborah:

1-	A dau.	born			1688,	d. young	1696		
2-	Deborah	"	Feb.	27,	90,	d "	bp.	Aug.	1699
3-	Abigail	"	Feb.	8,	92,	d. "	bp.	"	"
4-	James	"				d. "	bp.	"	"
5-	John	"				d. "	bp.	Sept.	1704
6-	Ebenezer	"				d. "	bp.	Oct. 15,	1699
7-	A son	"							
8-	"	"							
9-	"	"							
10-	"	"							
11-	"	"							
12-	"	"							

Children born in Lexington, Mass. by Margaret:

13-	William	bp.	May 27,	1705,	m. Martha Ranney
14-	Margaret	bp.	Nov. 24,	06,	
15-	Hannah	bp.	July 25,	08,	
16-	Thomas	bp.	May 14,	10,	m. Abigail Whitemore
17-	Phebe	bp	Mar. 29,	13,	
18-	Jonathan	bp	Oct. 31,	14,	m. Lois

Ref. Willson Manuscript by Margaret Willson Mighell 1819.

3 2 1
THOMAS WILLSON (James, John) was born in Lexington, Mass., baptized May 14, 1710 the second son of James and Margaret Russ (Mrs. William Peters) Willson; married Abigail Whitmore about 1728; he was a soldier, under the British Goverment during the French and Indian War.

In his second campaign he was sent as a scout with fourteen or fifteen men from Fort Edward to Williamstown to fetch in a young man who had been sent out the week before, who became sick and was left behind.

After traveling for eight miles they saw a bear, it being against the laws of the officers to fire in the woods, they at first hesitated, finally their Lieutenant said," It will let the enemy know if there is anyone in the woods and we are not afraid of them,"

Mr. Willson advised the party that he thought there would be great danger for so small a party firing in the woods, " There maybe a large party of Indians near by, in which case we shall expose ourselves to imminent danger of being killed or taken by them." However he loaded his gun, saying he would never discharge it except at the enemy.

They fired and killed the bear, but a large scouting party of Indians happened to be in the woods, heard the report of the guns, and immediately bent their steps toward the place from which the sound came, but hearing no further sound turned back on their course.

Our travelers, not suspecting the least danger, still pursued their march. They had not marched far before they saw a deer, which they also killed and dressed it off, loading it on a horse which they captured in the woods.

They then marched on in apparent safety, but unfortunately the Indians heard the second shot, turned again in their course and lay in waite. The scouting party trudged along thinking of nothing but of a fine feast of roasted venison when they reached camp, when suddenly the Indians rose and fired upon them, killing eight and wounding two.

Willson was one of the wounded, it brought him to his knees but he immediately recovered, brought his gun to his shoulder, but the smoke being so thick he could see nothing, but it quickly cleared and he saw two Indians running toward him; he shot one and wounded the second.

However he was taken prisner with five others, they then tied a rope around the neck of Willson and led him around to see them strip and scalp the dead, which they hacked in a most shamefull manner. They then took off Willson's jacket which had several bullet holes thru it. They looked with astonishment at each other, gabbling among themselves, then pointing upwards, concluded that he had been perserved by some over-ruling providence, then came to him, patting him on the head and appeared very friendly.

He feared he must soon share the fate of his companions, sat with his head bowed dreading to see the hatchet raised above him, but the Indians concluded not to harm him, set out for Crown Point, which they reached in two days.

They waded thru rivers and streams on their way and took cold in their wounds, which caused them to become almost unbearable. One of the captives became nearly exhausted and said he could not go any further; Willson told him he must go as long as he could take a step, as the Indians would certainly kill him if he gave out, thus he was prevailed on to proceed.

When they arrived at Crown Point they found their wounds in a bad state of mortification, however a French doctor was at hand who dressed the wounds, removing the dead flesh, washing the wound with brandy and applying salves. They stayed two days there, then set out for Caghnawaga with three other captives. On their arrival they were obliged to run the gauntlet while their captors threw stones at them, clubed them with clubs and other weapons, knocking them down and bruising them in a shocking manner.

Willson suffered the most, because they said he fired after he was surrounded. He was knocked down several times, at last he was almost unable to rise, they ordered him to get up and run, but he refused them and told them if they intended to kill him they could finish him on the spot, but a Friar coming up told them, he would never pardon their sins again if they did not desist from their cruelities, when an Indian Capt. Peter stepped up, took him by the hand, and led him away. This was the same Indian who had captured him on the march. The other Indians followed cursing as they came, but they dodged from one hut to another until he was finally out of their reach and remained so until they were over their rage, but he was badly bruised, his head and face had scarcely the appearance of a human being.

As he partly recovered from his injuries, he was brought forward and seated on the ground, and while the Indians formed a ring about him, he was then given to an old squaw, to make up the loss to her of her only son, and their law was repeated to him; she was to treat him kindly, feed him well, cloth him warmly, and not to work him too hard. She was much pleased with him and conducted him to her wigwam, treated him with every mark of kindness, took all the burdens upon herself. She always took him with her when she went after wood, for fear some straggling Indians would find and kill him. She would not let him carry but small bundles while she loaded herself most heavily. She also took particular pains to furnish such kind of food as he liked, seasoned it with salt while for herself she made now and then a salt cake, eating the rest of her food fresh.

This tribe which were called Christian Indians, sent for the tribe called Cold Indians to assist them in their enterprise of taking Fort Henry on Lake George.

They met at this squaw's wigwam for their pow wow; on this occasion she hid him for fear they would get drunk and kill him, improving every opportunity to run and see if he was safe, frequently crying over him, and expressing all the anxiety of a most tender mother.

She would often tell him when the war was over he should return home, for his better safety she would accompany him as far as Albany. When he appeared sad, she tried every means to comfort him and would never let him work if he sweat.

He stayed with this Indian mother thirteen months when a favorable opportunity presented itself for his escape; a young man who was taken captive, came to stay with him one night. The young man kept talking in his sleep, he began asking him questions by which he found out he intended to run away. When he awoke, he inquired of him if that was not his intention. He at first denied it, but finally acknowledged it. Willson then told him if he did not promise to wait one week until he could get ready, he would divulge the whole plot to the Indians, and he agreed to wait.

Willson then told his mother he would go to Laparara to m make shoes for the French settlers, she agreed that he might, and furnished him with an ax and blanket. He also took a pair of moccasins and slipped them inside of his shirt, took his leave of the unsuspecting squaw who waited patiently the return of her son till the time expired for his return. She then sent to Laparara, but could not hear of him. She then sent word to Montreal, but could gain tidings of him. She was then persuaded that he had made his escape. The most tender mother could not have made greater lamentations than did this poor squaw for fear he would suffer or starve to death on his way to his family.

Fortune seemed to favor their escape. There were four in the party. They made a friend of a Dutchman, who had lived with the Indians from childhood and had married amongst them. He slyly carried all the provisions he could with ammunition and gun, a pocket compass, and hid them in a hollow log. Being thus furnished with provisions they set out on their way. They lived in the most sparing manner upon this small stock of food which lasted, but ten days, except a piece of bread which they saved. Eating roots when they grew too faint to walk, then they would take one mouthful of bread and drink a little water. They travelled in this manner for three days, after the bread was consumed they travelled seven days with nothing but roots and one partridge which they ate raw. They killed two partridges after the seventh day which they roasted. Up to this time they had not ventured to make a fire for fear the Indians would discover them.

They travelled on the west side of Lake Champlain, which made the jouney very long and tedious. They at last came to a swamp, being unacquainted with the extent of it, they concluded to go thru it; it proved to be very fatiguing, as the swamp was completely filled with grapevines, they were obliged to crawl on their hands and knees a great part of theway. When they were about halfway thru, one of the men became so exhausted from fatigue and hunger, that he gave up and laid down, saying they would never get thru, and might as well lay down and die as to try to go further, as he knew they must die in the swamp.

Mr. Willson was determined to persevere in their undertaking, and after resting awhile he prevailed upon the man to resume his journey. After travelling the greater part of the day in this manner they at length had the satisfaction of finding themselves free of the swamp. They were still destitute of any kind of food except wild cucumbers, which were very plentiful. At last they came to an abandomed Indian hut. Here they found some pieces of stinking meat which they swallowed with the most greedy appetite, being a most delicious repast for them after having fasted so long.

One of the men found also a piece of mouldy bread, which he proceeded to eat although warned that it would certainly make him sick, but he paid no attention to them and ate the bread; he was soon punished for his incredulity, he had scarsely swallowed it before he became so sick and distressed that he could hardly stand. They took him by the arm and led him about until he soon began to throw it up, which greatly relieved him. However, he was not able to travel until the next day.

They then resumed their journey and in two days reached Fort Edward, just as the troops were retiring to rest. It is impossible to describe the joy of our heroes or the supprise of the officers, when they entered the markee. They staid two or three days until they were partly recovered. Mr. Willson then set out for Killingly, Conn. where his family lived. When he came within a few miles of home, he sent a man ahead to inform his wife of his return, she being very much out of health, he thought the shock would be too great if he came in on her too suddenly, as she had considered him dead, not having heard from him since his capture. He lived nineteen years and five months after his return and died on his birthday, being sixty-six years of age, May 14, 1776.

Children born in Killingly, Conn.:

1- Margaret born 1729, m. Ezekiel Mighell May 23, 1754.
2- Abigail "
3- Hannah "
4- Phebe "
5- Mary "
6- Sarah "
7- Damaras "
8- John "
9- Peters "

ANDREW PETERS

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An Englishman who came from Holland, landed in Boston, Mass. while it was a village, the streets being merely country roads. He was hopping from stone to stone thru the streets to avoid the mudd holes, when he looked up and saw a young lady standing at the window of one of the village homes. He thought to himself I will marry her if possible. She was also looking with an eye of partiality on the young Englishman, as he nimbly skipped along the street. Not long after a favorable opportunity offering, he became acquainted with the amiable young lady, Miss. Mercy Beamsley, and married her. He then moved to Andover, Mass. where he established a distillery, becoming quite rich and raised a family of five sons and three daughters.

The Indians were at that time very troublesome and killed many of the inhabitants, amoung whom were two of his sons. They had been out in the fields at work, and were returning to the village, when two Indians, who had been scouting discovered them. They immediately hid behind a log fence, telling their captive John Singleton, if he stirred or made any noise they would kill him on the spot. As the young men rode by the Indians fired, one fell from horse dead, the other was shot thru the body, the ball passing thru the horse's neck, which set off at full gallop, causing the blood to spout from the wound of the young man at every jump.

The Indians were continually making such inroads upon the property of the inhabitants in this early day, that it rendered it almost impossible for them to secure a comfortable supply of food for their families. They always had to carry their guns into the fields when they were working, so as to have them near at hand. For more than thirty years they had to persue this method, the Indians continually destroying all they could lay their hands on, burning their buidings, driving away their cattle, and murdering the inhabitants on sight.

Children born in Ipswich, Mass.:

1-	John	born	Feb.	28,	1660,	m. Mary Edwards	
2-	Elizabeth	"	Aug.	26,	62,	m. John Sady	
3-	Andrew	"				m. Elizabeth Farnham	
4-	Mary	"	June	12,	68,	m. Thomas Chandler	May 22, 1686.
5-	Mercy	"	Jan.	27,	70,	d. December 25, 1690.	
6-	William	"	Feb.	7,	72,	m. Margaret Russ	1694
7-	Samuel	"					
8-	Timothy	"					

Ref. Willson Manuscript by Margaret Willson Mighell 1819
Peters of New England by Edmond Frank Peters 1906

WILLIAM PETERS (Andrew) was born in Andover, Mass. February 7, 1672

the third son of Andrew and Mercy Beamsley Peters; married Margaret, the third daughter of John Russ of Andover, Mass., about the year 1694.

They established their home not far from his father's home, but were constantly fleeing to the garrison for safety. In August Mrs. Peters went to their house to pick berries for dinner. After she returned to the garrison, the Indians came to the house, hid themselves in the corn field. After dinner Mr. Peters decided to go to the home to take care of his horse, which was lame; she was very anxious to go with him, but it began to rain and he told her it would not do for her to go, she however felt anxious to go with him, followed him out of the house, saying she could go, that the rain would not hurt her. He saw that she was anxious, turned about, and in a very tender manner replied, " No, my dear, you must not go, as the grass is very wet, you will wet your feet and catch cold." He told her he would go to his father's home and bring back a fat lamb on the horse, so that she might see him also. She watch him until he was out of sight.

He went to the house, led out his horse, and stood fixing his hoof, when nine Indians rushed upon him, seized and carried him into the house, where a Mr. Hoyt was making ropes. They instantly knocked Hoyt down and scalped him. To Mr Peters they handed a pair of mocosins and told him to put them on, as he must go with them. He sat down, began tieing them on, but noticed that the Indians were very busy looking around the house for plunder, he observed that the doorway was clear, he sprang forward, but unfortunately the pole on which Hoyt had hung his hemp was so low that he struck his head against it and was knocked to the floor.

The Indians sprang upon him with their hatchets, he made a sharp resistance, knocking three of them down, but the fourth struck him over the eye with the head of his hatchet which crushed his skull. They scalped him, gathered up their plunder and fled.

They afterward told that they washed the scalp in the rain water, which stood on the heads of some cider barrels at the door.

Mrs. Peters had in the meantime become uneasy watching the hours slip by, hoping each succeeding moment would releive her anxiety by the return of her husband, for she much feared what had befallen him.

She communicated her fears to the women of the fort who only laughed at her. About sun down one of the young men of the fort went after the cows, as his path led near their house, she told him she would go with him. They walked in silence until they came to the path which led to her home, then she told him he must go with her, as she dared not to go alone. Without saying a word he stepped into the path before her, as they came in sight of the house, they were surprised to see the hogs around the house, one of which was eating something which lay within the door; the hogs being accustomed to run wild in the woods.

The young man who came first around the corner of the house, exclaimed," Lord have mercy on us! " They ran several rods, when Mrs. Peters stopped and asked what did you see? He replied " I saw blood on the heads of the barrels, and the hogs were eating Mr. Hoyt's head." She asked did you see anything else? A gleam of hope came to her, that her husband was yet alive. He again replied," I thought I saw a bundle of clothes." She fainted and fell into the arms of the young man, who bore her to the fort. They were met by several of the inhabitants at the fort, who carried her in. She remained unconsious thruout the night.

Three or four men armed themselves, and went to the house found Mr. Hoyt and Mr. Peters lying in their gore, Mr. Hoyt was partly dragged out doors and his head was almost eaten off.

One of the men caught Mr. Peters up in his arms, thinking that his heart still beat, but it soon ceased. He laid him down, knowing that they could not carry him to the fort. They carried Mr. Hoyt in and laid him beside Mr. Peters, then shut the door and left them until morning. The next day they were brought into the fort and buried.

Mrs. Peters remained unconsious for several days, and when she recovered her senses, all her grief returned and the memory of her most tender, and affectionate husband. Her infant son was ten months old at the time of his father's death ,August 13, 1696; she remained a widow until the winter of 1703, when she married James Willson of Lexington, Mass.; she died at Killingly, Conn. in 1754 at the age of eighty years

Children born in Andover, Mass.:

1- John born Oct. 1, 1695, m. Mary Marks April 3, 1717.

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